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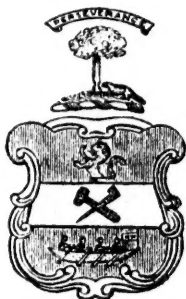
Herridge, William T.

A SERMON

PREACHED IN

St. Andrew's Church, Ottawa,

TO



"STRATHCONA'S HORSE"

Previous to their Departure
for Service in South Africa,

ON SUNDAY, THE 11TH MARCH, 1900

By

The Rev. W. T. Herridge, M.A., D.D.

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"Forward!" Ex. 14 : 15.

This is the word of command which repeatedly echoed through the ranks of ancient Israel, which inspired the great world-monarchies in their march of conquest, which has been heard above the din of battle in many a well-fought field, which is whispered in the deepest instincts of our own nature, and addressed by God Himself to the conscience of those whom His hands have made. It is the one word which rings through Canada to-day : "Forward ! Forward !"

I shall not need to apologize, therefore, if I address myself to those who form but a small minority of this congregation. They are with us now in this temple of peace. They must soon go forth to the rude alarms of war. We hope for their triumphant return to our shores, but God alone knows how many may be left behind. It is most fitting that an hour of solemn worship should precede the tasks of our soldiers as they set out for the field of strife, and that we should unite in the prayer that God may bless them.

For in speaking to them, we are in a certain sense speaking to all. They are our representatives, chosen by us to stand the brunt of danger, to carry the emblem of the Maple Leaf into the forefront of the fight, to bear witness to our patriotism and our attachment to the British Empire, and to prove that, throughout this wide Dominion there beats a heart of sympathy with our fellow-subjects in every quarter of the globe.

I welcome you, therefore, my brothers, to this service. Your presence here shows that you recognize, in some degree at least, the claims of religion upon you. If you are Presbyterians, you have no reason to be ashamed. You are being equipped for your work by a distinguished Canadian who is himself a Presbyterian ; and wherever there is demand for intelligence, self-sacrifice, and energy, you will find that your church need not fear comparison with any other in the land. I should be sorry to see anyone a bigot. Christianity is greater than ecclesiastical organizations, and perhaps there never was a time in our history when we needed to feel this truth more than we do to-day. But the best way to learn respect for the views of others is to keep some respect for your own. If anybody chooses to strut about in boastful arrogance, or to assume airs of fancied superiority, let him do so. The proof of worth is in actual accomplishment, and no one need to be too sensitive about his dignity if, by the grace of God, he has the real power. You inherit from your forefathers the courage of convictions, the love of truth, the habit of thinking, the perseverance of moral earnestness. See to it that you keep these virtues, and hand them down unimpaired to future generations.

You are shortly to set out for the field of war, and if your military service is to be enthusiastic, you must be persuaded that the quarrel is a just one. Great Britain has not precipitated this strife. There are even those who think she has been altogether too patient. Every reasonable measure has been taken to prevent an appeal to the sword.

But, while the principles of Christianity, when once illustrated as they ought to be, will make wars to cease unto the ends of the earth, no Christian nation can stand idly by and allow any of its subjects to be denied the full privileges of freemen. This is no war of mere conquest. If it ends that way, so much the better for the future of southern Africa. But it is primarily a war in defense of justice and liberty. It declares that Britain will not tolerate any form of oppression; that Dutch and Uitlander, black and white, must have an equal share in civil rights and civil responsibilities; that neither avarice, nor intrigue, nor pious cant shall afford excuse for laying tyrannous hands on anyone.

This war, then, is no mere petty broil. There are great issues behind it. We cannot but admire the courage of the Boer, and his stubborn resistance to the best soldiers of the Empire. It is clear that he has been well prepared, and that, at the outset, we were not prepared. But the Boer fights what must be inevitably a losing battle; and, in more senses than one, he has but to come out into the open to learn this. The strife between a civilization which, in spite of religious customs, retains some of the worst elements of mediaeval thralldom, and a civilization which, in spite of many faults and errors, is the synonym of fair-play—such a strife can have but one result. And when it is fought out, the triumph will not be alone a British triumph, but the triumph of that which makes for the culture and advancement and freedom of the world.

No one can rightly say, therefore, that the mother-land is stirred only by selfishness in sending forth her best blood to brave the dangers of battle. Her enthusiastic sacrifice is laid upon the altar of liberty, and few have shrunk from offering it. The Highlanders of Scotland, the brave Irish troops under a peerless Irish general, vie with the flower of English regiments in gallant charge against the common foe. The castle as well as the cottage, shorn of its sons, is plunged in anxiety and grief, and Tommy Atkins fights shoulder to shoulder with the scions of noble houses, and dies with them on the same field of strife. No spectacle could afford a more impressive answer to intriguing demagogues who would set the masses against the classes. Britain's aristocracy has shown that it deserves the name, and the pulse of a united patriotism beats throughout the whole country.

Nor has the mother-land been left to fight alone. All her children are with her. Greater Britain is stirred to the depths, and modern history presents no more convincing object lesson than that which is seen to-day upon the veldts of southern Africa. We have elaborated theories of Imperial federation, and listened to eloquent words about it; but the world is now made to see that the British Empire holds together through no mere idle sentiment, that wherever the Union Jack floats, her sons will not be quicker to rejoice in their birthright than to accept its most arduous and heroic responsibilities. The colonials from all quarters have won their spurs, and it is impossible that the ties now cemented by blood should

ever be broken. Canadians must feel a thrill of pride in the repeated tributes to the gallantry of those whom we have sent to the field of battle. They have seemed even to court the peril, and in the onset of victory some of them have died. It is a wreath of immortelles which we lay upon their graves ; and while our hearts are full of a sorrow which, though it falls with most crushing force upon the homes that have been made desolate, is shared in a certain measure by us all, we cannot but rejoice that they have proved their manhood, that they have struck a decisive blow against the strongholds of oppression, that they have helped to make us a self-respecting and united people, that they have added a new pathos and dignity to that chorus which rises from millions of voices all round the globe, "God save the Queen !"

And since you are shortly to join your comrades in completing a triumph already well begun, may I venture to indicate some of the qualities which will be of greatest service to you ? First of all, you must be faithful, faithful while life lasts, faithful even unto death. You have embarked upon a noble task, and, at whatever cost, I am sure that you will discharge it worthily. You are not going forth upon a vacation. It is not pleasure but duty which calls you from your several places, and though its voice lead you into peril and hardship, up and follow it as men who are true to your country and true to your God.

And if you are faithful, you must needs also be brave, not because of a dull insensibility to fear, but because you have learned to triumph over it. No one needs to be told that courage is a fine

thing. We all admire it ; we all seek to possess it. Courage is one of the essentials of the soldier, and courage means far more than mere physical intrepidity. Britons have shown it over and over again in the onset of battle. Crecy, Balaklava, Waterloo are names of inspiring memory, and we have no reason to believe that the prowess of our forefathers is gone from us. But courage of still higher quality may be manifest in quiet endurance, in patient suffering, in the firm repulse of every assault from the black hordes of evil.

I charge you, therefore, to be temperate in all things. The military career is one of peculiar temptations, and has been apt to run at times into riotous excesses. But, believe me, that if you wish to be in the forefront in conquering others, you must first learn to conquer yourselves. Keep in control every baser appetite and passion. Reserve your strength only for noble enterprises. Refuse to listen to any voices which would corrupt your conscience and degrade your manhood. In a word, show yourselves Christian soldiers, banded together in the chivalry of righteousness.

Nor need you bid farewell to charity, though you are about to take part in the fortunes of war. Our religion has destroyed at least some customs of barbaric strife, and has given to battle, when it cannot be otherwise, a more unselfish purpose and a more exalted dignity. You will be quick, as others have been, to aid your friends, but you can learn also without malice to front your enemies. They, too, feel the meaning of loss and pain, of desolate homes and broken hearts. And, therefore, though you are pledged to resist their injus-

tice, and to give a good account of yourselves where danger is thickest, that need not prevent you from rejoicing when the conflict is over, nor from cherishing the hope that the hands now lifted in mutual destruction may yet be clasped in a friendship which not only proclaims the prestige of Britain, but adds a new and indestructible link in the chain of the world's brotherhood.

I can well understand the eagerness with which you desire to take your part as soldiers of the Queen. You may be too late for defensive operations, but you will not be too late to join that advance which is destined to sweep through the whole Transvaal. Kimberley is relieved; Ladysmith is relieved; the foe retreats from British territory; Majuba Hill is amply avenged. But much yet remains to be done; and if the fatuous struggle is still prolonged by an obstinacy which does not know when it is beaten, you will be in time to see the British flag waving from the citadel of Pretoria, and to join the shout of triumphant gratitude at the advent of white-winged peace.

Whatever be the tasks committed to you, discharge them faithfully and well. You have reason to be proud that you bear the name of one whose magnificent patriotism has few parallels and whose unselfish deed will be held in remembrance as long as Canada endures. A hardy life has equipped many of you for the trials of fatigue and peril. You are capable of rendering a service which is peculiarly your own. Advance, then, to the post of duty, your breasts animated by a sense of noble comradeship, and by an ardent love of freedom.

" Be just and fear not :
 Let all the ends thou aim'st at be thy country's,
 Thy God's and truth's."

And when the war is over, the Strathcona Horse will not only be honoured by every loyal Canadian, but will take its place in the roll of Imperial renown, and be enshrined in the hearts of future generations.

But while you are fighters, the fighting itself is of less importance than the results which are bound to follow it. Britain has been compelled to use stern means, but the end in view must never be forgotten, and, perhaps, no one can now predict how far-reaching its issues may be. We live in the midst of events which are making history. In sharing the tasks of the mother-land, a new dignity is given to the character of this Dominion. Our patriotic sentiment has proved itself no empty thing. Just as a little while ago we joined in the Empire's Jubilee, so now we are one with our fellow-subjects everywhere in loyal defense of national rights and liberties. While, therefore, we may regret the circumstances which called forth this display of enthusiasm, and the costly sacrifice of life involved in it, we cannot but see that it will bind us as a people more closely together, that it will rebuke the violence of fanaticism and answer once for all the indifference which would advocate a policy of selfish isolation, that it will add a fresh lustre to the annals of our country, that it will afford to the world an impressive spectacle of the wide-spread strength and love which honours the name of Britain.

There are those who tell us our that our Empire has reached its zenith of influence, and now slowly sinks towards its decay. But unless we wholly fail to learn the lesson which these stirring times are teaching us, unless we nurse a false pride and forget the God of battles, I believe that a new century will be ushered in by achievements far more glorious than any which grace the annals of the past. The dominion of the sword alone is passing away. Courage is no longer regarded as a mere brute quality, but as a virtue which belongs to the best type of manhood. War must now have some moral purpose, or it will fail to enlist the noblest sympathies. And even when it is waged in the interests of justice, the duties which follow it afford the real test of a nation's resources. We are sprung from stalwart loins, and though the lion may be slow to rouse, let no one touch him with impunity. But "peace hath its victories not less renowned than war." To the English-speaking race the Providence of God has committed no small part of the duty of advancing the civilization and Christian principle of the world. However divided by distance, by local interests, or even by varying modes of government, reason and conscience alike suggest an Anglo-Saxon federation of pure and upright hearts, a federation which is not satisfied until it has made right more easy and wrong more difficult everywhere, until it has given a new impulse to human progress, until it has subdued the demons of vice and avarice, and brought back to mankind the angel-presence which does not fear to look into the face of the Father who is in heaven.

Forward, then, my brothers, to the tasks assigned you. Forward in the self-respect which will stoop to nothing that degrades, in the loyalty which does not shrink from sacrifice, in the truth which purifies the inner temple of the soul. Forward as Canadians who go forth amid the fervent prayers of your fellow-countrymen, and upon whom are turned the eyes of all the world. Forward as one battalion of an Imperial army, focused at the storm-centre, united in a common cause, and prepared for every hazard until the final victory is won. Forward under the flag which, in spite of Britain's faults and failings, has avenged the oppressed and succoured the helpless, which has brought knowledge and freedom in its train, which has overturned the idols of superstition and intolerance, which has compelled the despot to relax his grasp, which has secured to every honest man his share in an inheritance of glorious rights and liberties, which, though it is an old flag, is being always renewed by the homage of a growing multitude of sincere and grateful hearts. Forward! Forward! and may God be with you all!

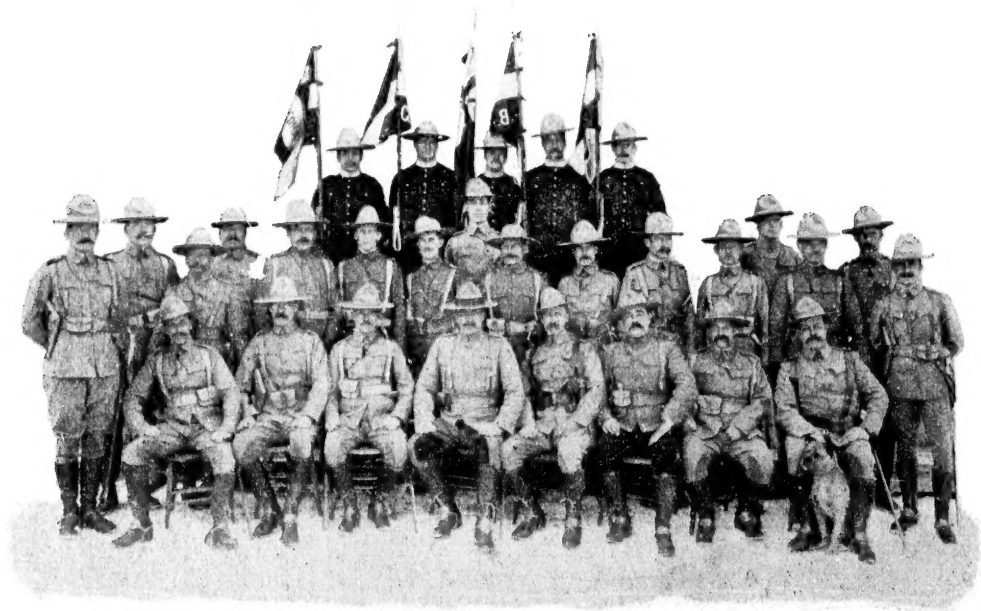


Photo by A. G. Pittaway, Ottawa.

OFFICERS OF "STRATHCONA'S HORSE."